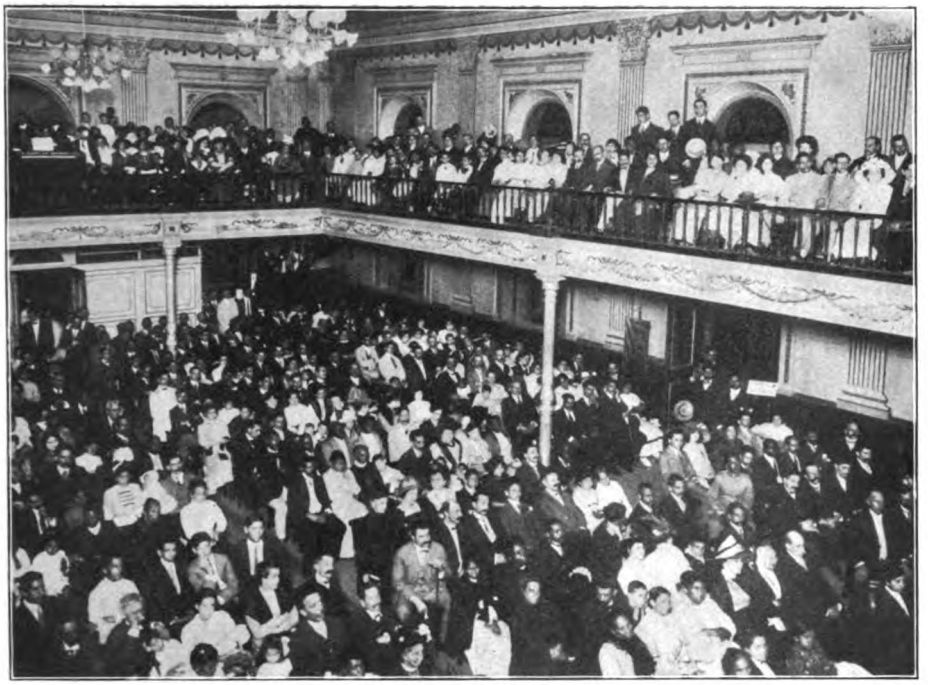

A SERVICE IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

# A Wide-Awake Church in Brazil

## A STORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF RIO DE JANEIRO

BY REV. ALVARO REIS, PASTOR

Few Christians in North America and England know of the strength and influence of some of the Protestant churches in South America. It is therefore illuminating to read of the history and manifold activities of this organization which is but a sample of many equally strong and evangelical.—EDITOR.

THE Presbyterian Church of Rio de Janeiro was organized over fifty years ago (on January 12, 1862) by Rev. Ashbell Green Simonton, the first American Presbyterian missionary to Brazil, who had arrived in Rio two years and a half before.

Two years later, Rev. José Manoel da Conceiçao, an accomplished priest and eloquent orator, who was converted from Roman Catholicism, was ordained in this church as the first national preacher.

A church building was erected in 1873, with a seating capacity of six hundred, and in the Jubilee year this was enlarged by the addition of a gallery seating 300 people.

In May, 1897, when the present pastor took official charge of the church, the number of members was 585, and in eighteen years the church increased to 1,395 members. In 1897, the church had one other preaching station (in the suburbs), while to-day there are five (daughters) organized churches that worship in their own buildings, beside twelve congrega-

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tions, ten of which have no buildings. In the same period the contributions for all purposes have grown from $8,000 to $14,000.

All this work, including the Sunday-schools in all the churches and

PASTOR ALVARO REIS

congregations, is directed by nine native preachers and teachers, and there is not an American Presbyterian missionary working in all this field of the Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro—a territory nearly as large as France.

In the Presbytery of Rio de Janeiro there were received by profession of faith in 1914, 431 adults; children baptized, 504. The Presbytery's contributions for all purposes amounted to $50,000.

The Presbyterian Church of Rio supports its pastor, one assistant preacher, and a secretary, who gives his principal time to the editing of the weekly paper, *Puritano* (Puritan)—for the propagation of the Gospel, with a circulation of twenty-five hundred copies.

The activity of the Presbyterian Church of Rio is indicated by the organizations at work, which include a Ladies' Aid Society, senior and junior Christian Endeavor societies, and a normal Sunday-school class.

This church renders financial assistance to much good work in Brazil and to our first missionary station at Lisbon, in Portugal, opened in 1910, during the pastor's visit to that country.

From this church have gone out twelve preachers of the Gospel, and at present four members are preparing to preach.

The Christian Endeavor Society, after having constructed a nice little chapel for their first missionary station in *Fontinha* (suburb), is constructing now a large room for its meetings in the yard of the Central Presbyterian Church of Rio. This structure will cost more than $4,000. This society, which is the strongest in Brazil, does good work among the prisoners, explaining the Gospel and giving evangelical tracts; also sends pamphlets by mail to the gentlemen of good social and political position, and occasionally distributes thousands of tracts on the streets.

If we want a strong and living Church it is necessary that every believer should read his Bible daily, as well as some evangelical book; that he should pray fervently; do his daily work honestly and diligently; that in every place, by his life and words and by evangelical efforts, he should do something daily for the advancement of the Kingdom of God; that he have

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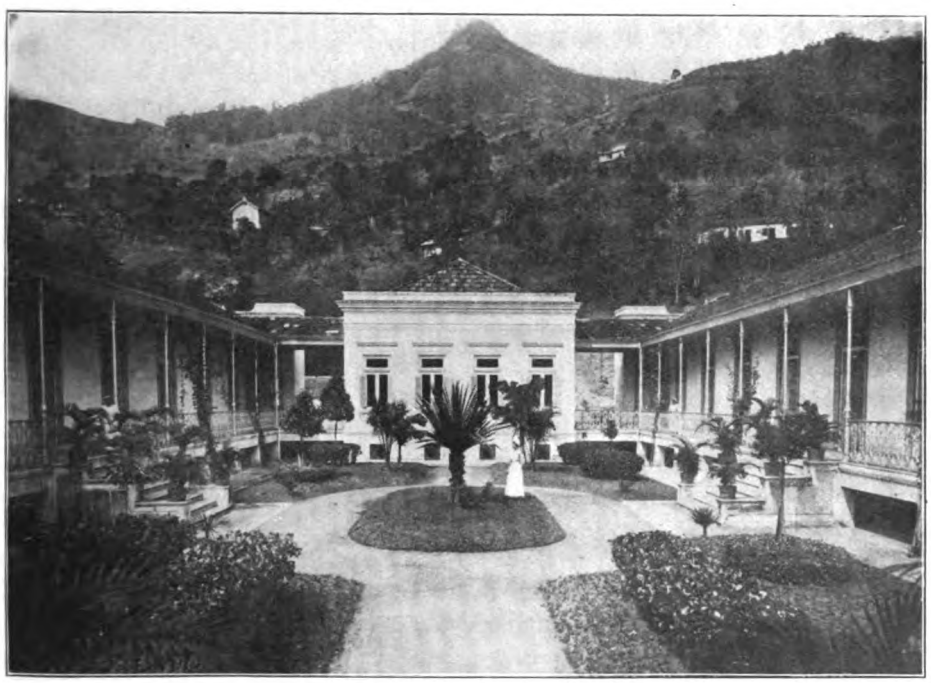
some special work in the church, and that he contend constantly against the iniquity of this world, against the religious indifference, against the social corruption, against the superstition, idolatry and fetichism of the Roman worship, against the heretical doctrines of the modern spiritualists and their medical charlatanism. Finally, he must strive for the animation of all the lukewarm believers who forget their church and that the greatest privilege in the world is to cooperate with Christ in leading souls from the darkness to the light of the Eternal Life and Love of God.

In the Church, the body of Christ, all the believers have some particular, individual and proper function to perform. When even the most insignificant member or organ of the body does not go well—good health disappears and sickness comes with its sufferings and tears. My greatest efforts as preacher and pastor, and my purpose before God are that the Holy Spirit may move all the hearts of the members of the Presbyterian Church of Rio to do daily some work for Christ and his Church. But all my efforts can not reach all the members. Oh, there are yet so many believers that do nothing visible or perceptible in favor of the Christian cause! In the meanwhile I will continue in this effort as much as possible through my sermons, prayers and conversations. The Evangelical Church in Brazil is growing in numbers and power.



GARDEN IN INTERIOR OF EVANGELICAL HOSPITAL, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

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